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STUDY
PROJECT

JOINTNESS OR JOINTLESS AT LEYTE

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL KENNY J. JEFFERSON

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

JOINTNESS OR JOINTLESS AT LEYTE

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

BY

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31 MARCH 1989

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Leyte Campaign was the beginning of the end for the Japanese Army and Air Force and the end of the Japanese Navy as an effective fighting force in the Pacific. Historically, the Leyte Gulf naval battles have served as a model for navy tacticians to study the right and wrong way to conduct naval campaigns. As far as the Japanese were concerned both the sea and land campaigns were the decisive blow that ended their goals of domination and conquest of the Pacific area.

The questions arise: What if circumstances had been different? What if independent decisions had not been made? Would the outcome have been different? Did the joint service program make the difference?

This paper will look at the joint operation of the services. In particular it will examine the joint operational ability of the services, in compliance with the principles of war. Was there jointness of the services at Leyte or was it jointless?

The paper will also examine the contribution of each service to the Leyte campaign. The focus will begin with the Navy since they were the first to encounter action at Leyte. This will be followed with a detailed look at the Army's land campaign and thereafter the Air Force's contribution to the operation. The paper will also address the joint problems experienced at Leyte and how they affected the outcome of the campaign.

The controversy surrounding Halsey's decision to abandon the San Bernardino Strait in favor of choosing the Japanese Northern

Force will also be examined to establish whether unity of command was a valid problem at Leyte and its effect on the outcome of Leyte.

Also included in this discussion will be the ability of the Armed Services to work together. It raises the question as to whether the Goldwater/Nichols Act should have been enacted years ago.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

Between April and August 1944 General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Command started its stepping stone march across the Western Pacific to the ultimate defeat of Japan by securing Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea; a move that provided much needed ports and airfields for future campaigns toward the Philippines.

In the Central Pacific, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's Command, simultaneously devastated the Japanese Fleet in the Battle of Philippine Sea and by August the Pacific Fleet's Amphibious Forces took possession of the Marianas Islands. These Pacific Fleet accomplishments followed with the occupation of the Palau Islands in September. These unexpected successes encouraged General MacArthur to target the Philippines for invasion in November.

As late as August there was still much indecision in the J.C.S. regarding routes, island targets and key ports/ airfields. The indecision of the J.C.S. was evident in a directive sent to General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz in March 1944 which stated, " the most feasible approach to Formosa, Luzon and China is by way of the Marianas, the Carolines, ¹ Palau and Mindanao." At that time the J.S.C. perceived using Formosa, Luzon and a Chinese coastal area as potential bases for the final assault on Japan.

However, before a decision could be finalized, the J.C.S. had to resolve a conflict among General MacArthur, Admiral Ernest King and Admiral Nimitz. MacArthur believed that the best route

to Japan was through the "New Guinea-Mindanao Axis" approach,² securing the Philippine Islands before proceeding on to Japan. Of course MacArthur had a moral obligation to the Philippino people, since he had promised a speedy return to the Philippines when the Japanese forced him out in 1942. King and Nimitz wanted to use a two-pronged approach to Japan using the bases captured in Marianas as a springboard. King and Nimitz envisioned attacking on the right prong with B-29 bombers "up the ladder of the Bonins"³ and capturing Formosa and a base on China up the left prong. MacArthur's role would be to secure Mindanao and have the Far Eastern Air Forces pound the Japanese air power on Luzon into submission and then help the Pacific Fleet capture Formosa. King and Nimitz figured this plan would be less costly and with the capture of Formosa the Navy could choke off all Japanese traffic in the South China Sea and enable the Allied Naval Forces and B-29's to strangle Japan by surface, air and submarine stockades.

This plan fell through in February 1944 when the Japanese moved a sizeable portion of their naval fleet from the Inland Sea of Japan to Singapore to be near their source of fuel oil, a move which caused the British to cancel the deployment of a part of their Southwest Pacific fleet to reinforce the U.S. Seventh Fleet. The Japanese also conducted a second surprise move in May 1944 when their army moved southward from Honkow, China and captured the cities of Kweilin and Linchow along with their airfields. This strategic move by Japan negated the King/Nimitz Marianao-Formosa-China plan.

In June 1944 the J.C.S. queried Nimitz and MacArthur about the possibility of bypassing the Philippines and Formosa, then attacking the southern most Japanese island of Kyushu. Nimitz and MacArthur rejected this plan as too costly in people and logistics. In fact, MacArthur was outraged with the J.C.S. for even considering bypassing the Philippines. He immediately submitted a counter plan to the J.C.S. to invade Mindanao on 25 October 1944 followed by attacks on Leyte 15 November, Luzon 15 January 1945, Mindoro in February and Manila on 1 April. Admiral King quickly opposed this plan in favor of their Marianas-Formosa-China plan even though the Japanese were quickly closing off the South China coast.

In July, President Roosevelt intervened and directed Nimitz and MacArthur to meet him in Honolulu for secret discussions about the plan for invasion of Japan. MacArthur was very persuasive at this meeting. He convinced the President that the liberation of the Philippines with ground and airpower was the moral thing to do since the U.S. had had long standing ties with the Philippines. He further elaborated that "Japan could then be forced to surrender by the use of sea and airpower without an invasion of the Japanese homeland."⁴

At the late date of 1 September 1944, the J.C.S. remained indecisive as to the location of the first attack. It was not until 11 September that a time table was established by the J.C.S. to attack the Philippines starting with Morotai on 15 September. However there were further deterrents to the schedule of events. As a deception and defensive measure for the upcoming Morotai campaign, Admiral Halsey conducted bombing raids on the

Japanese islands of Yap, Palaus, Mindanao and Bonin. To Halsey's complete surprise these raids went unopposed and his naval airforce destroyed over 700 Japanese aircraft and many ships.⁵ These unexpected successes prompted Halsey to believe that the Japanese were on their last leg and that maybe the planned invasions of Palous, Yap, Moratai and Mindanao should be deleted and instead attack Leyte with the planned forces thereby decreasing the war by several months.⁶ However, the invasion and occupation of Morotai Island and the Palaus Islands were considered essential to facilitate the success of the Philippine campaign and were retained as a part of the original plan. Besides, these operations were too far advanced to terminate and the ports/airfields would provide excellent insurance for the upcoming Philippine invasion -- both of these islands were only 500 miles from Mindanao. MacArthur and Halsey secured both of these islands on 15 September. It took several months to completely secure both of these islands at a cost of over 2000 U.S. casualties but they were fully operational by 20 October. Halsey expedited a dispatch through Nimitz to the J.C.S. outlining his plan. On 13 September, MacArthur's Chief of Staff received and approved the plan from Halsey and the J.C.S. to attack Leyte on 20 October. The Southwest Pacific staff and primary players met near Hollandia, New Guinea, on 13 September⁷ to plan the Leyte operations. MacArthur's promise to return to the Philippines was about to become reality.

ENDNOTES

1. Samuel Eliot Morison, Loyte, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1958, p. 4.
2. Ibid. p. 4.
3. Ibid. p. 5.
4. Ibid. p. 10.
5. Ibid. p. 11.
6. Ibid. p. 13.
7. Ibid. p. 15.

CHAPTER III

THE NAVY CAMPAIGN

The Leyte Gulf naval operation was one of the largest collection of naval ships in history; consisting of over 700 allied ships to include combat and support ships and over 64 ¹ Japanese combat ships. The author, Morison, calculated that the naval component included 143,688 allied naval soldiers (officers and enlisted men) and 42,800 Japanese naval soldiers in the Leyte ² Gulf action. The navy employed every known naval warfare tactic except the mine at Leyte Gulf. The Leyte Gulf battle was considered as one of the greatest naval actions of all time. Historically, the Leyte Gulf action is considered one of the greatest naval actions of all time. Its fragmented U.S. command structure, many naval tactical operations and the joint integration of naval, air and ground combat power have provided historians and military strategists a unique opportunity in the study of war. Unquestionably, the Leyte Gulf Battle was the turning point in the Pacific war for the Japanese navy--after this battle the U.S. Navy ruled the seas and pretty much did what they wanted to.

JAPANESE PLAN

After the Allies' capture of Hollandia and Saipan early in 1944, the Japanese had estimated that the decisive battle would

be in the Philippines. The Palau and Morotai Island invasions in early September of 1944 were anticipated by the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, this reaffirmed that the Philippines was the target for late 1944. The Philippine Islands were mainly important to the Japanese as a staging area to protect their convoys that pass through the Formosa Channel and the South China Sea.³ If these routes were closed by the Allies, the only resources left would be in China. Early in August the Japanese General Headquarters decided that the primary defense for the Philippines would be built on Luzon; however, the priority was later shifted to Leyte once the invasion was initiated in October. The Japanese collected very little reconnaissance intelligence on the Leyte operations but its other intelligence sources made up the difference. The Japanese ambassador to Moscow on 8 October learned from a diplomatic "leak" at a Russian vodka party that the XIV and XX Army Air Force in China would participate in the Philippine invasion.⁴ In contrast, allied intelligence collection efforts were poor.

The Southwest Pacific (SWP) Headquarters under General MacArthur was responsible for collecting and distributing intelligence to naval forces and in most cases was almost always wrong. In fact, on A-Day SWP Headquarters issued a report, "Enemy Capabilities of Naval Reaction to Allied Landing on the Philippines," which basically stated that "the Japanese had no apparent intent" to interfere with the Leyte landings.⁵ The Japanese built four separate plans to deal with the possible invasions of the Philippines, Formosa-Ryukyu, Honshu-Kyushu and

Hokkaido-Kurilez; however, everyone was speculating it was the Philippines. The plan was called SHO-GO, which means "Victory Operation".⁶ The Philippine basic plan was twofold -- the main body, the Northern Japanese Naval Force (18 ships) commanded by Vice Admiral Ozawa was to decoy Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet north of the Philippines; while Vice Admiral Kurita, First Striking Force consisting of 32 ships would proceed through the San Bernardino Strait and Vice Admiral M. Nishimur's Southern Force (under Kurita) would attack through the Surigao Strait to destroy allied amphibious forces and fire support ships in Leyte Gulf. Vice Admiral Sakonju Second Striking Force (Rear of Southern Force) and the Advance Force consisting of 16 submarines also were involved in the campaign. Admiral Toyoda, Combined Fleet Commander, was to execute SHO-1 upon receiving accurate intelligence of the target date. He obtained this information on 17 October when U.S. minecraft were spotted near Suluan and executed SHO-1 at 1110 hours, 17 October.⁷

PLANNING PHASE

The command structure for the Leyte operation was complicated and violated one of the principles of war, "Unity of Command". MacArthur was the Supreme Commander and commanded all ground forces along with the Seventh Fleet and some air forces. Under MacArthur was Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, Seventh Fleet Commander and Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, Sixth Army Commander. Also supporting the Leyte operations was the Third Fleet commanded by Admiral Halsey whose chain of command flowed to Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet. Halsey also commanded the VII Army Air Force.

General MacArthur's mission statement to Kinkaid was quite detailed but generally gave him the mission of transporting and establishing troops of Sixth Army on Leyte and to support the operation with naval, air force, and submarine weapon systems and protect against Japanese invasion forces from the surrounding seas. Since Admiral Halsey was not in MacArthur's chain of command no specified written instructions were provided to him; however, an agreement was reached at the Hollandia planning session with Halsey's plans officer and MacArthur's operations officer that Third Fleet's duty was to "cover and support Southwest Pacific Forces" in order to assist in the seizure and occupation of all objectives in the Central Philippines", and to destroy enemy naval and air forces in or threatening the Philippines Area.⁸ An additional paragraph was slipped into Admiral Halsey's operations plan that stated "in case opportunity for destruction of major portion of the enemy fleet is offered or can be created, such destruction becomes primary task."⁹ This clause would cause subsequent problems in the Leyte Gulf battle since Halsey considered that his primary mission was to destroy the enemy fleet -- rather than the invasion of the Philippines. Halsey was not in MacArthur's chain of command and did not have to have MacArthur's approval on any matter.

Deceptive measures should be taken in any properly executed operation to facilitate surprise. During the Leyte Operation several attempts were conducted that completely failed. The first was the bombardment of Marcus Island which was supposed to indicate that we were coming up through the Bonins. The second

was the British Naval attack on the Nicobur Islands in the Indian Ocean, which was supposed to trick the Japanese into thinking that the main attack was in Malaya or Indonesia. Both of these measures were ineffective, and in fact the main Japanese naval attack force (Kurita's Fleet) departed Lingga Roads the day after the last attack to execute the SHO - GO Plan. The primary objective area for the operation was to be on the gulf coast side in the Leyte Valley which is set between the coastal towns of Tacloban and Dulag. The Northern Amphibious Attack Force (X Corps) was to land three miles south of Tacloban and the Southern Attack Force was to embark north and south of Dulag.

SOFTENING UP

In support of the Leyte operation Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet was given the mission of striking Okinawa, Formosa and Northern Leyte on 10-13 October; striking Bicol Peninsula, Leyte, ¹⁰ Cebu and Negros and supporting the landing on 16-20 October. The main purpose of Halsey's Third Fleet strikes (10-20 October) was to soften up Japanese air force and defense capabilities that would have an impact on the Leyte operations. On 10 October Halsey's TF 38 struck Okinawa with 1396 sorties -- numerous small ships and an excess of 111 enemy aircraft were destroyed. On the following day TF 38 hit northern Luzon with about 61 aircraft destroying numerous aircraft on the ground. The biggest strike was against Formosa on 12-14 October. The objective was to deny use of the airfields in Formosa where the enemy had a significant amount of aircraft. The success of TF 38 was tremendous -- between 650 and 700 enemy aircraft were destroyed, numerous small

ships damaged or destroyed and an enormous destruction of ammo dumps, industrial plants as well as other components necessary in battle.

During the week prior to the assault on Leyte, Southwest Pacific land based planes, Halsey's carrier-based planes, China based planes and the Army, Navy and Marine Corps planes hit targets all around the Philippines. Japanese losses in aircraft were catastrophic while allied losses were minimal. The stage was now set for the invasion of Leyte and the great naval battle.

THE BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

The first hostile encounter in the Leyte Gulf took place in the Palawon Passage on 23 October. Two U.S. submarines, the Darter and Pace spotted Kurita's Center Force. Darter engaged and sunk the heavy cruiser Atago, Admiral Kurita's flagship, and heavily damaged another cruiser. Pace also engaged and sunk a heavy cruiser. Darter eventually ran aground in the Palawan Passage and sunk. Their accurate and timely reports to Halsey's TF 38 set the trap for beginning the Leyte Gulf Battle. On 24 October Halsey's TF 38 spotted Kurita's Center Force entering the Tables Strait bound for the San Bernardino Strait near Leyte. Halsey immediately ordered three of his carrier task groups to deploy off the Bernardino Strait to cut off Kurita's Center Force. The trap door was now open to fight the first of four naval actions at Leyte Gulf, The Sibuyan Sea Battle.

BATTLE OF SIBUYAN SEA

A search plane from TG 38.2 was the first to spot Kurita's Center Force as it was coming into the Tablas Strait. Halsey immediately launched his carrier fighters, bombers and torpedo-

bombers against Center Force. In all, 259 sorties hit Kurita's fleet. The enemy lost one battleship, one cruiser and two other battleships plus one heavy cruiser was damaged. These losses along with the losses of the three heavy cruisers at Palawan Passage sufficiently weakened Center Force but it still packed a powerful punch. The planes of TF 38 had achieved historical success in sinking one of Japan's powerful battleships. The enemy had been taught a lesson -- one never attacks a carrier fleet with fast planes without air protection. Kurita realizing that he had no air support retired his fleet to the west of Mindoro. Center Force's planned rendezvous with Southern Force inside Leyte Gulf had been upset -- the SHO-GO plan was delayed. Kurita realizing he was off schedule turned his fleet back toward Leyte. At 1935 hours a night pilot spotted Center Force heading back into San Bernardino Strait toward Leyte gulf. Kurita received word that Main Body Striking Force would reach Leyte Gulf at 1100 hours 25 October and Southern Force at 0400 hours 25 October. Kurita expected to arrive at Leyte Gulf at 0900 hours 12 on the same day.

Kurita reached the Philippine Sea at 0025 hours expecting to find Halsey's TF 38. However, Halsey had taken the decoy bait and headed north to search for Ozawa's Northern Force. The Northern "back door" was left open to Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet in the Leyte Gulf. The Southern Force "C" and the No. 2 Striking Force (part of Southern Force) were respectively spotted by planes at 0905 24 October in the Sulu Sea and at 1155 24 13 October near the Cagayan Islands. American planes attacked

Force C but caused little damage. Admiral Kinkaid estimated that the Southern Force was going to attack through the Surigao Strait into Leyte Gulf. He employed his ships to prepare for the possible encounter.

Admiral Ozawa's Northern Force had steered a northern course away from Halsey into the Inland Sea of Japan. On 24 October at 1145 hours Ozawa's search planes spotted Halsey and steamed south until they were within plane striking range (210 miles). Ozawa launched an airstrike at 1145 against TG 38.3 (Sherman's Group). The planes were unable to locate TG 38.3 and had to land at airfields in Luzon. Halsey's search planes spotted Ozawa Northern Force later in the day headed west. Halsey again took the bait and ordered all four of his Task Groups north to attack Ozawa, just as the Japanese wanted. Admiral Kinkaid naturally assumed that Halsey was covering the North Philippine Sea area against any enemy naval threat as spelled out in his operation order. Halsey assumed that the Center Force had been badly weakened at the Battle of Sibuyan Sea and possessed very little threat to Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet. He also interpreted Nimitz's orders "to engage the enemy fleet if and when the opportunity occurred" as overriding orders of Kinkaid's instructions.¹⁴ Consequently, Halsey perceived he was going after the stronger forces. Two of Halsey's four Task Group Commanders also advised Halsey to turn back south to defend San Bernardino Strait against Center Force. However, Halsey obviously thought he was right and continued north after Ozawa's Northern Force leaving Kinkaid's Escort Carrier Group Northwest window open to an attack from Kurita's Center Force.

THE BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT

Nishimura's Southern Force was now approaching (25 October) the Surigao Strait which led into Leyte Gulf. Admiral Kinkaid had set his naval forces to defend Leyte Gulf. He made Rear Jesse B. Admiral Oldendorf's Bombardment and Fire Support Group responsible for defending the Surigao Strait. Oldendorf's command had three groups: the Left Flank (5 cruisers and 9 destroyers), the Battle Line (6 battleships and 6 destroyers) and Right Flank (3 cruisers and 13 destroyers). Oldendorf positioned his three groups in an east to west 12 mile direction thereby blocking the entrance to the Surigao Strait. The battleships were positioned on a rotating battle line across the Strait with the cruisers and destroyers steaming back and forth on lines two to five miles to the front. Forty-five motor torpedo boats forming the Seventh Fleet Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron were given the mission to patrol the Minanao Sea back to the Amagusan Point on Leyte -- a distance of about 150 miles. The main mission of the patrol boats was to act as the "early warning system" for the fleet and independently engage targets with torpedoes. Admiral Nishimura's Force C would be the first to enter the Surigao Strait. Admiral Shim's Second Striking Force would enter the fight several hours later. Nishimura's Force was composed of two battleships, one cruiser and four destroyers. His force entered the Mindanao Sea at 2200 hours on 24 October and was picked up on radar by the PT boats. The PT boats attacked the Fleet through the entire Mindanao Sea and into Surigao Strait with only minimal damage. However, they

accomplished their main mission--Admiral Oldendorf was notified of Nishimura's presence at 0026 hours 25 October, the trap was set. Nishimura's fleet reached the Right Flank Group first where five destroyers attacked with torpedoes at 0256. Between 0254 and 0420 the remainder of Right Flank and Left Flank struck. From 0351 until 0410 the Battle Line struck with 14 and 18- inch guns. The trap had been sprung--by the time the battle was completed two battleships and three destroyers were sunk, a heavy cruiser and destroyer were severely damaged and retired from the battle.

Shim's Second Striking Force entered the Surigao Strait at 0300. Already aware that Nishimura's fleet had been attacked he passed several burning ships and at 0425 decided to retire from the area and await further developments.

The Army Air Force and Naval Air took over during the mop-up phase and eventually sunk another heavy cruiser. The Battle of Surigao Strait was the last battle in which air power played no part. It was also the last time a battle line was employed. Morison refers to the battle line as a

. . . tactical device for naval combat, dates from the reign of James I -- when Sir Walter Raleigh ordered the royal Navy to abandon attempts to board as the main objective, in favor of the whole fleet following the admiral, vice-admiral, or other leading ships within musket range shot of the enemy. Which you shall either batter in pieces or . . . drive them foul of one another to their utter confusion.

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The Southern Force that participated in the Surigao Strait departed in almost total defeat-- only two ships escaped. There was only one other battle where the navy had such success -- the Cape Engano Battle which occurred the same day as the Battle of

Surigao Strait.

THE BATTLE OF SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT

The Battle of San Bernardino Strait was the main confrontation of the four that took place in Leyte Gulf. As stated before Admiral Halsey had left the San Bernardino Strait completely unprotected and had taken off on a wild goose chase after the Northern Force unbeknownst to Admiral Kinkaid, the Seventh Fleet Commander was busy supporting the invasion of Leyte. On the morning of 25 October Kinkaid's Escort Carrier Group, commanded by Rear Admiral Thomas L. Sprague was divided into three task units -- Taffy 1, Taffy 2 and Taffy 3. Their regular operating areas were 30 to 50 miles apart; that of Taffy 1 to the southward, off Northern Mindanao; that of Taffy 2 (Rear Admiral Stump) in the center, off the entrance to Leyte Gulf; and that of Taffy 3 (Rear Admiral Clifton Sprague) northward off Samoa; Vice Admiral T.L. Sprague also commanded Taffy 1.

Taffy 3 was the Force that Kurita's men saw on the morning of 25 October. Admiral Sprague's force included six escort carriers, three destroyers and three escort destroyers. Because of poor communication and intelligence Kurita was completely surprised to find Sprague's force in the San Bernardino Strait. His fleet of 22 out of an original 32 ships was an overpowering force for Taffy 3. However, luck was on the American side. Kurita's lookouts misidentified the escort carriers as heavy fleet carriers and cruisers. This caused much confusion and Kurita ordered his battleships and cruisers to attack and the destroyers

were left to the rear causing his force to become seriously divided. Kurita had lost tactical control of his fleet. Sprague immediately ordered all of his planes to be launched and his destroyers to screen the carriers with smoke, and to independently attack. The battle that transpired was a remarkable story of bravery and courage. For almost two hours and a half, Sprague's small force of six CDE's, three DB's, four DE's and planes from Taffy 2 stopped Kurita's powerful Center Force and caused more damage than they suffered. Admiral Sprague's summary of events tells the story:

The failure of the enemy main body and encircling light forces to completely wipe out all vessels of this task unit can be attributed to our successful smoke screen, our torpedo counterattack, continuous harassment of enemy by bomb, torpedo and strafing air attacks, timely maneuvers, and the definite partiality of Almighty God.

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At 0911 Kurita called the attack off and retired north. The steady pounding of the carrier planes and the aggressiveness of the ship commanders had fooled him into believing that Taffy 3 was a larger force. After Kurita's Center Force had regrouped, he decided to return to San Bernardino Strait but changed his mind after being attacked by 30 carrier planes and changed his course north.

THE BATTLE OF CAPE ENGANO

The battle of Cape Engano was probably the most decisive blow to the Japanese of the four Leyte Gulf battles.¹⁸ This battle was primarily a carrier aircraft encounter. The only ship to ship action occurred during the mop-up phase when several crippled enemy ships were sunk by U.S. destroyers. Halsey possessed

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overwhelming strength against Ozawa's Northern force (17 combatant ships vs 64 for TF 38). The number of aircraft was also disproportional (29 vs 300 plus TF 38). TF 38 located Ozawa's Northern Force off of Cape Engano on the morning of 25 October and pounded them with air strikes for ten hours. Damage to the Northern Force was catastrophic--four carriers and two destroyers were sunk and most of the remaining ships were severely damaged. The Battle of Cape Engano drove nails in the coffin for the Japanese. For the remainder of the war in the Pacific, the U.S. Navy and allies ruled the seas. The major naval battles in Leyte Gulf ended after the Battle of Cape Engalo, however, there were numerous smaller encounters after 26
19
October.

MOPPING UP

After the Cape Engalo Battle TF 38 was critically low on fuel and Halsey had the Third Fleet randomly stand down for fuel. On 26 October Kinkaid asked Halsey to provide combat air patrols over Leyte Gulf. Due to a shortage of provisions, bombs and torpedoes, Halsey had to delay support until 27 October; Third Fleet provided air support for the next three days. On 27 October bombers from Sherman's TG 38.2 caught a small troop convoy in the open around Calamian Islands and sunk two enemy destroyers. On 28 October two destroyers from TG 38.4 made sound contact with two Japanese submarines and sunk them. From 27 to 30 October Halsey's fast attack carrier force struck enemy airfields on Cebu, Luzon and Manila destroying well over 100 enemy aircraft. On 29 October three carriers from TG 38.4 and TG

38.2 flight decks were severely damaged by Kamikaze pilots; 43 planes were destroyed and 148 men were lost. Two carriers were damaged so badly that they had to be escorted to Ulithi for repairs. On 30 October Halsey ordered his fleet to Ulithi to replace critical supply shortages. Third Fleet received a new commander on 30 October --newly promoted Vice Admiral John S. McCain.

After Third Fleet departed Leyte Gulf, the enemy started to bring in fresh planes from Formosa and Kyushu. The first and second of November were rough days for the Seventh Fleet--numerous air attacks were flown against them. The destroyer Adner Read was sunk by an enemy bomber and 22 men were lost. Five other destroyers were damaged on the same day. A message was sent to Halsey for assistance. McCain returned to Leyte Gulf on 5 November with three carrier groups and plans to attack enemy airfields on Luzon and deprive them of air superiority over Leyte.

Sherman's TG 3 received a surprise off San Bernardino on 3 November when an enemy submarine slipped into the convoy and hit light cruiser Reno with a torpedo and seriously damaged it --four destroyers escorted Reno back to Ulithi.

On 5 November McCain arrived 80 miles off shore (near Pollillo Islands) of Luzon. Each task group was given a specific target on Luzon: TG 38.1. Northern Luzon and Clark Field; TG 38.2, Luzon South and Mindoro and TG 38.3 extreme Northern Luzon including Manila Bay. McCain caught the Japanese napping.. The success of the air attack was devastating to the Japanese -- 439 enemy aircraft destroyed and the heavy cruiser Nach sunk,

Vice Admiral Shima's flagship. U.S. losses were minimal --25 aircraft destroyed, 18 pilots/crewmen lost and the carrier Lexington severely damaged by a Kamikaze pilot. TF 38 once again had carried the battle to the enemy and had reduced the air threat on Leyte. Between 7 and 11 November the air action slowed down in the Leyte area. However, the Japanese began to convoy reinforcements from Luzon to beef up the 21,700 troops on Leyte. On 10 November a troop convoy with six destroyer escorts was sighted leaving Manila. Halsey's Third Fleet was operating about 400 miles west of the Marianas. Acting on MacArthur's request, Halsey directed TF 38 to close in on the convoy. About 200 miles from the convoy a spotter plane located them and 347 planes were launched for the attack -- four enemy destroyers were sunk ²⁰ immediately and two others were sunk in the Manila Bay. American losses were minimal --nine planes. This strike was critical to the Japanese since it took several weeks before enough ships could be mustered to enhance the enemy situation in Leyte.

After the successful sea battles at Leyte Gulf Halsey was looking forward to attacking the Japanese mainland. On 16 November MacArthur, General Kenney and Rear Admiral Shermann (Halsey's representative) met to discuss support for Sixth Army and Leyte Gulf. Since Army airfields were not yet serviceable on Leyte and the Japanese were intent on defending Leyte it was decided that the Third Fleet would have to support the Philippine Campaign for an indefinite period. Halsey gracefully accepted the decision and the attack on Japan was

Air strikes, resumed on 13-14 November at shipping points around Luzon that could reinforce Leyte. One light cruiser and five destroyers were sunk along with 84 enemy aircraft. TF 38 lost 25 planes. This action once again disruffled reinforcement flow to Leyte. On 19 November TG 1,2, and 4 once again hit Luzon destroying over 100 enemy aircraft. On 24 and 25 November TG 1 and 2 sunk another heavy cruiser and several frigates along with 55 enemy aircraft.

TF 38's luck ran out on 25 November. The Japanese had been beefing up their air support and had discovered that TF 38 seemed to always launch air strikes from the same sea area. The Japanese finally spotted TG 2 and 3 launching aircraft and sent their Kamikazes to work. The carriers Hancock, Intrepid, Cabot and Essex were hit with Kamikaze planes and received moderate to heavy damage. After this incident TF 38 withdrew to Ulithi and let the Army and Marine Air Corps take the air war to the Japanese. Halsey felt it was not practical to expose his
22 carriers to Kamikaze attacks.

After the Third Fleet departed Leyte Gulf, Rear Admiral T. D. Juddok took command of Task Group 77.2 Naval Forces in Leyte Gulf. TF 77.2 consisted of four battleships, five cruisers and sixteen destroyers. Without naval air support the Kamikaze attacks picked up. Two battleships, one cruiser and two destroyers were hit with Kamikaze planes sustaining moderate to severe damage with numerous casualties. To counter the Kamikaze attacks, MacArthur brought four squadrons of the faster Marine
23 Hellcats to replace the slower P 61's After arrival of the

Marine squadrons, the situation in Leyte improved for the American forces.

I have commented on several submarine encounters during the Leyte Gulf. However, there were many other submarine operations that have not been addressed. There were two submarine commands in the Pacific during World War II, Submarine Pacific Fleet under Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood and Submarine Southwest Pacific,²⁴ under Rear Admiral Ralph W. Christie. Lockwood's fleet operated in packs of 3 to 4 out of Pearl Harbor, Eniwetok, Majuro and Guam covering waters off Japan and South China Sea. Christie's fleet operated out of Fremantle, Western Australia and Brisbane, Queensland, patrolling the seas of Netherlands, East Indies and the Philippines. There were far too many individual submarine encounters to properly include them all. Therefore, I will demonstrate their effectiveness with the data in chart form. The following table will demonstrate the immense destruction during the three crucial months of 1944:

JAPANESE TONNAGE SUNK BY U.S. SUBMARINES

Month	Warships		Mar's		Total	
	#	Weight	#	Weight	#	Weight
Sept	7	26,905	48	152,505	55	179,410
Oct	9	27,862	66	320,906	75	348,568
Nov	18	125,877	56	214,506	74	340,383
Totals	34	180,444	170	687,917	204	868,361
						25

General Tojo of the Japanese high command made an observation

which was addressed to MacArthur after the war, "one of the main causes for the defeat of Japan was the destruction of merchant shipping by the United States' submarine force.²⁶

U.S. losses of submarines to Japanese attacks were minimal in comparison to Japanese during WWII -- 44 versus 128.²⁷ By comparison the Germans lost 781 U-boats but had many more to lose. Some historians today contend that the Japanese would probably have faired better in the war if they had built more smaller warfare ships like the submarine rather than the more costly battleships and carriers. It is interesting that the Japanese are now doing just that -- in the last ten years they have built a formidable destroyer navy.

MARINE PARTICIPATION

The Marine Corps participation in the Leyte operation was limited. The V Amphibious Corps Artillery, commanded by B. G. T.E. Bourke, USMC was the only marine land force to participate in the entire Leyte operation and was on loan from the Marine Corps to support the Sixth Army invasion with fire support. They served with distinction and valor throughout the Philippine campaign.²⁸

Marine Corps Aviation played a more significant role in the Leyte operation. Major General Ralph J. Mitchell commanded the Marine Aviation assets in the South Pacific as AirNorSols. Up to the Leyte campaign Mitchell's assets had primarily been used in mopping up roles. He felt his marine aviators were very proficient and under utilized in the early stages of the Pacific

campaigns. Early in the Leyte planning stages he had offered the Marine aviation assets to MacArthur and Halsey. However, due to planning problems and a shortage of land based airfields, the marines were sparsely utilized and operating under their capacity. Finally in early December 1944 the Marine aviators had their chance. After the departure of Halsey's Third Fleet from Leyte in early November of 1944 the Kamikaze pilots began to have a field day with Leyte naval warships and land base aircraft. The P 61's in use at Leyte were not maneuverable enough to counter the Oscars, the Kamikaze night bomber aircraft. With the cut back in naval carrier support MacArthur was also encountering problems with enemy convoys successfully moving reinforcements from Luzon to Leyte. Halsey recommended that MacArthur swap the navy P 61's for the four squadrons of the faster and more maneuverable Marine Hellcats located on Palau Island. This move pleased Mitchell and was effective on 3 December when 87 marine planes flew into Tacloban airfield for permanent duty. The marine aviators were finally going to be employed in the Pacific War for something besides "milk runs". Before the Leyte campaign was successfully terminated ten more Marine squadrons of fighters (F 4U's) were assigned to mainly counter the growing problem of Kamikaze planes. The marine aviators quickly put the dampers on the movement of Japanese reinforcements from Luzon, sinking many troop transports and combat ships. As the Philippine campaign moved into Luzon and Mindoro the success of the Kamikaze pilots also decreased as more marine fighter aircraft were employed. Before the war ended in the Pacific Marine Aviation would grow to

five wings, 30 groups and 145 squadrons consisting of over
31
120,000 personnel.

ENDNOTES

1. Samuel Eliot Morison, Leyte, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1958, p. 159
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3. Ibid., p. 67.
4. Ibid., p. 71.
5. Ibid., p. 72.
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7. Ibid., p. 119.
8. Ibid., p. 57.
9. Ibid., p. 67.
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12. Ibid., p. 95.
13. Ibid., p. 191.
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15. Ibid., p. 240.
16. Edwin P. Holt., The Battle Leyte Gulf: The Death Knell of the Japanese Fleet, New York, Weybright and Talley, 1972, p. 208.
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19. Ibid., p. 339.
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21. Ibid., p. 354.
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CHAPTER IV

THE ARMY CAMPAIGN

The primary reason for the land campaign in Leyte was to gain air and logistical bases in support of future campaigns into Luzon, China and Formosa. The Japanese were strong in Luzon north of Leyte and a solid Army-Air Force base would be required for further expansion into the Philippines chain. Besides, MacArthur had a strong moral commitment to the 17 million Philippino people. In May 1942 he was forced out of the Philippines by the Japanese invasion and he promised the Philippinos he would return. For this reason he felt obligated to liberate the Philippinos at the earliest possible date. Of course he also wanted to avenge his defeat by the Japanese. Another reason for retaking the Philippines was to cut off the Japanese lines of communication to the Netherlands Indies. The Indies were economically very important to Japan in minerals and food; possession of the Philippines provided Japan with staging areas, ports and important sea lanes. The geography of Leyte was another factor for its selection.

Leyte is located in the heart of the Philippine chain. Therefore, every major city, port and airfield could be reached in a matter of hours. The capital city of Leyte, Tacloban also possessed an adequate airfield. Leyte Gulf was a deep wide open body of water with good approaches to low sloping shores to eastern Leyte and possessed excellent anchorage for ships. Leyte Valley was also another excellent reason for choosing Leyte; it stretched across eastern Leyte for fifty plus miles with flat

fertile farmland that possessed excellent possibilities for airfields and base areas. In fact the Japanese had been building several airfields in the area. The drawbacks to Leyte were its monsoon season and poor road network but time and geography were more important factors.

PLANNING PHASE

The Leyte operation was the largest collection of troops, ships, aircraft and equipment in the Pacific campaign; over 200,000 soldiers were involved in the land operation at Leyte.¹

The command organization for the Southwest Pacific Area was of course commanded by General MacArthur. Under him were Allied Air Forces Commander, Lieutenant General George C. Kenney; Allied Naval Forces and Seventh Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid; and Sixth Army Commander, Lieutenant General Walter Krueger.² Under Krueger was Commander of XXIV Corps, Major General John R. Hodge and Commander of X Corps, Major General Franklin C. Sibert. Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet Command was detailed to provide naval support but he was not in MacArthur's chain of command. During the amphibious movement Admiral Kinkaid was to be commander of all troops. However, once established ashore General Krueger was to assume command of all land forces. General Kenney, Admiral Kinkaid and General Krueger were to answer directly to MacArthur. The primary fighting units for Leyte were the Fifth Air Force; the Seventh Fleet; the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions of XXIV Corps; the 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions of X Corps; and the 32nd and 77th Infantry Divisions in Sixth Army Reserve. The 32nd and 77th would arrive

on turn around troop ships from Hollandia, Morotai and Guam in middle November.

The mission statement from MacArthur to his SWP commanders was to "seize objectives in the Mindonao, Leyte and the Samar areas in order establish air, naval and logistic bases to cover subsequent operations to complete the reoccupation of the Philippines. On 15 September of course the Mindanao and Samar invasions were cancelled in favor of moving the Leyte campaign up to 20 October. All Allied Air and Naval forces including Halsey's third Fleet were directed to support this mission. Halsey's primary mission was to provide air support against the surrounding islands and to protect sea lanes from A minus 10 to minus 4. General Kenney's Air Forces including 5th, 13th, and Allied Air Forces were to work over Japanese facilities and ports on the surrounding islands; the 14th from China and the 12th Air Force from Central Pacific were ordered to pound Formosa air assets from A minus 9. Once airfields were established on Leyte the 5th Air Force would assume the air support role from Halsey. Obviously, Admiral KinKaid's 7th Fleet had the overall naval air/gun support mission as discussed in Chapter III.

The ground operations for Leyte was a four phase plan with Phase IV being contingent. General Krueger outlined the plan in his book as follows:

Phase I. Preliminary amphibious operations to secure the eastern entrance to Leyte Gulf.

Phase II. A major amphibious assault on the front Tacloban-Dulag to destroy hostile forces in that coastal strip and seize airdromes and base sites, followed by a swift advance to the northwest to gain control of Leyte Valley and the Capoocan-Carigara-Barugo area; open up San Juanico and Panaon Straits, and get airdrome and other construction started.

Phase III. Overland and shore-to-shore operations necessary to destroy the remaining Japanese forces on Leyte, seizure and occupation of southwestern Samar and opening of Surigao Strait.

Phase IV. Such operations as might later be directed for occupying northern Samar and destroying or containing hostile garrisons in other islands of the Visayan group; and completion of construction missions.

4

During Phase I of the amphibious operation, the 6th Ranger Battalion (A minus 3) was given the responsibility of landing, seizing and occupying the three islands in the entrance to Leyte Gulf; these islands were Dinagat, Homonhon and Suluan. They were to seize enemy material, destroy installations and the enemy, then evacuate after completing each mission.

In Phase II Krueger gave Sibert's X Corps (1st Division and 24th Infantry Division less 21st Infantry Regiment) the mission of landing in the vicinity of Pawing (H-hour) to seize the Tacloban airfield and the city Palo. His follow-on tasks were to secure the narrow San Juanico Strait and then move north to capture Capoocan -Barugo- Carigara cities and seize Leyte Valley. Hodge's XXIV Corps (7th and 96th Infantry Division minus 381st Regiment in Reserve) were to land at Dulag area (H-hour) and seize cities of Dulag, Buraven, Dagam and Tanavan; on order move south to secure city of Abuyog and west to secure Baybay then move south to relieve the 6th Ranger Battalion and the 21st Infantry Regiment. The 21st Infantry Regiment was also given an additional mission to land (H-hour) at Panaon Strait in southwest Leyte to secure Sogod Bay.

One of the major problems that concerned Krueger was the lack of an adequate reserve force. The 32nd and 77th Infantry Divisions would not arrive until A plus 3. Consequently, Krueger

had to keep the 381st Infantry Regiment as a floating reserve and the 21st Infantry Regiment had to shoulder an additional mission thereby weakening the combat power of both Corps.

Krueger also had the additional burden of supervising Major General Hugh J. Casey's Service Command (ASCOM) who had the mission of unloading ships at the beachhead and to construct airfields, and naval/air support facilities to support future operations. The ASCOM logistical operation was destined to become one of the largest supply and service operations in the Pacific.

By completion of Phase II Krueger hoped his forces had control of Leyte Valley, airfields and bases for future operations, thereby causing the Japanese to lose their will to resist. Phase III would then require X Corps to move south to secure Ormoc while XXIV Corps moved north from Baybay and married up with X Corps thereby driving the remaining Japanese into the western mountains. Phase IV was envisioned as V Corps driving into northern Samar to destroy enemy garrisons and bases. Other contingent missions involved landing and seizure of other small islands as time permitted and mopping up operations. These plans were based on optimism. Of course the best layed plans don't win wars because "luck, weather and unexpected events change outcomes"--this is what happened at Leyte.

THE JAPANESE DEFENSE PLAN

The Japanese expected the Americans to return to the Philippines sometime in late 1944; however, they were not sure just where the invasion would occur. In the summer of 1944 the Imperial General Headquarters had directed the upgrading of

defensive positions in the Philippines, the Kyukyus, and the Kurile Islands. These operations were known as the SHO (victory) Operations; Defense of the Philippines was SHO I. The Japanese had decided to stand and fight with their army, navy and airforces in these positions, since their main lines of communications ran through these islands to important war raw materials in the Netherlands Indies. Loss of these important sea lanes and ports in the Philippines would be devastating to the Japanese war efforts.

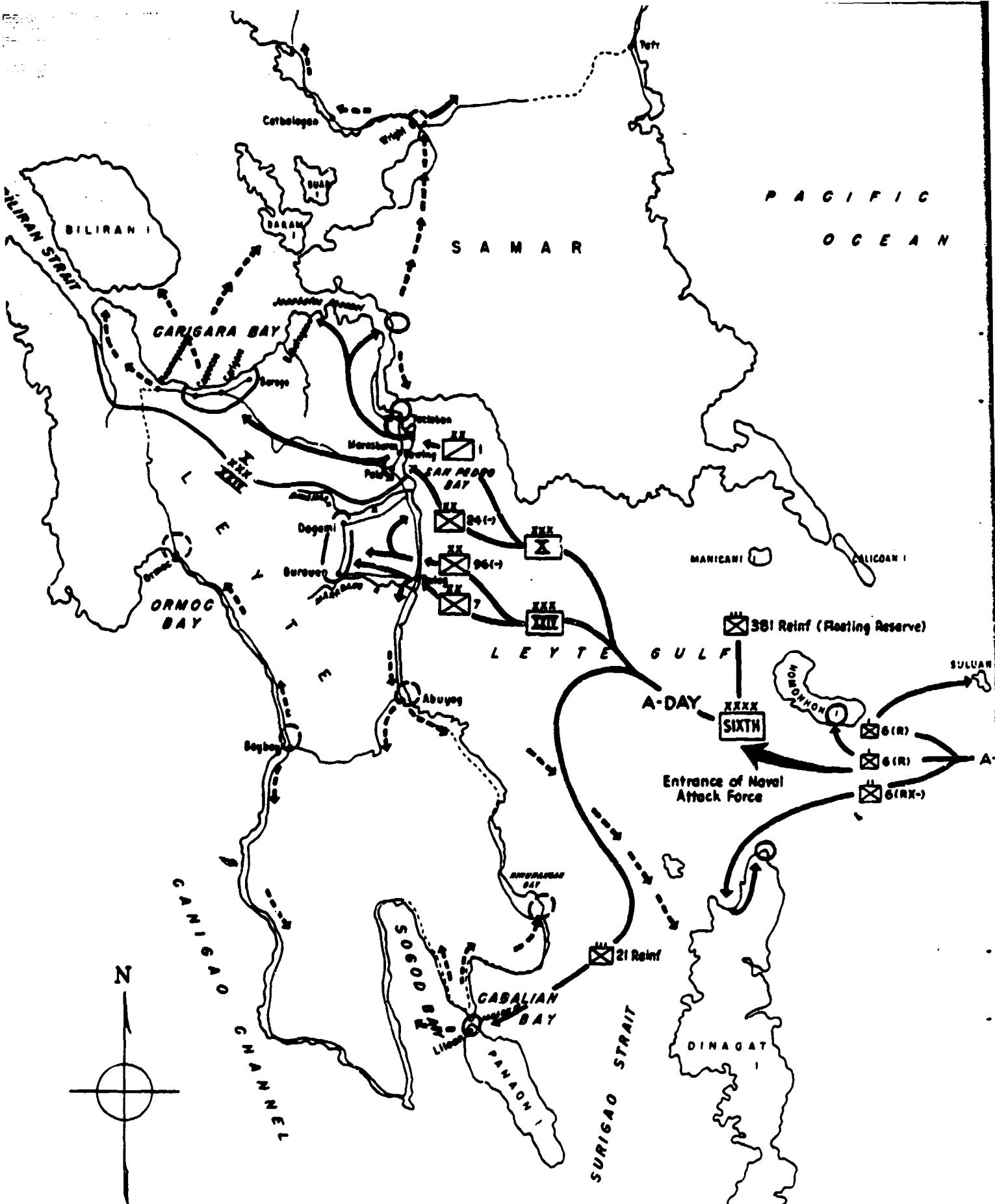
The Philippine area fell under the jurisdiction of the Southern Army Command with the 14th Area Army having primary responsibility for the Philippines. The 14th Area Army was commanded by General Tomoyuk Yomashita with headquarters in Manila, Luzon. The Leyte area fell under the jurisdiction of General Sosaka Suzuki commander of 35th Army which had responsibility for the Visayan Islands and was headquartered on Cebu Island. A part of the 14th Army was tasked to execute plans for the Philippine's defense. Since there was a shortage of troops in the Philippines, Yomashita decided to make the main defensive effort in Luzon where he would attempt to defend all of the islands with a mobile defense. The Imperial Headquarters allocated ten divisions and five brigades for the Philippines' defense: five divisions and two brigades in Luzon, four divisions and two brigades in southern Philippines, and one division and one brigade in China and Formosa. The plan was to ship the units in China and Formosa as soon as the action started. Most of these units would participate in the Philippine campaign. The 35th Army would have four Divisions to defend the

Visayan Islands. The 16th Division commanded by Lieutenant General Shiro Makino was given the task of defending Leyte. The 30th Division located on Mindanao along with two infantry battalions were designed back-up mobile forces to assist Leyte if needed.

The Japanese Imperial Headquarters debated on two types of defense concepts for the Philippines called "annihilation at the beachhead" and "resistance in depth". It was finally decided to use the resistance in depth because the beach defenses in the Philippines were not strong enough to withstand the American ship gun bombardments. However, General Suzuki decided to keep some troops on beach defense with the main defense inland. On Leyte General Makino established his main line of defense in the Dulag area. The third defensive line was set up in the Leyte Valley and the second in between the above two. Makino put his logistical base in the central mountain area of Jaro. Makino positioned his units as follows: one battalion of the 9th Infantry Regiment in the Catmon Hill and Tanauan district and the main strength of the 33rd Infantry Regiment in the Palo and Tacloban area.⁸

The 4th Air Army located primarily on Mindanao was given the mission of supporting the 14th Area Army. Its main mission was to interdict American shipping, transports, combat ships and support the Japanese sea convoys transporting reinforcements to Leyte. Its secondary mission was to attack American airfields and amphibious landing parties.

INITIAL OPERATIONS-PHASE I



The Leyte operations kicked-off at 0820 17 October 1944 when Company D, 6th Ranger Battalion landed on Suluan Island. The Rangers quickly secured Suluan knocking out a radio installation while killing 32 Japanese and only taking three casualties.

On the afternoon of 17 October three companies of the 6th Ranger Battalion landed and secured the north end of Dinagot Island. Action was almost unopposed except for a few Japanese casualties. Elements of B Company found an American flag and hoisted it thereby becoming the first unit to formally raise a U.S. flag for the Philippine liberation. Elements of B Company also landed on Homonhon Island on 18 October and secured it --no enemy was located. This landing was a day late because of high seas. This last action terminated Phase I except for some minesweeping and bombardment of landing areas and eastern Leyte roads. The stage was now set for the assault landing on 20 October.

PHASE II

On 20 October Phase II of the Leyte operations jumped off without a hitch. The six battleships from Admiral Obendorf's command pounded the landing area for two hours. At 0900 the cruisers and destroyers took over and started bombardment of the area to the rear and flanks of the landing area to cover the landing of X and XXIV Corps in the final fifteen minutes. At 1000 hours the two corps charged ashore. X Corps landed with little resistance. The 1st Cavalry Division landed near San Jose and quickly seized the Tacloban airstrip and continued to move northwest. The 24th Division's initial wave also successfully landed near Paving but its follow-on waves met enemy resistance

from artillery and mortar fire causing some casualties. The 24th overcame the bombardment and moved on to the Tacloban-Palo Road and secured its main objective, Hill 522 north of Palo. The 24th met strong defense positions on Hill 522 but thanks to early naval gun fire bombardment many of the enemy had left their positions for cover and had not returned before the attack. They were driven to the rear.

Meanwhile the XXIV had landed at Dulag against minimal resistance. However, the 96th Division ran into stiff resistance early in its advance and was temporarily pinned down. The 7th Division on the left flank also ran into heavy resistance around the Dulag airfield.

The 21st Regiment's mission to land on the south shore of Leyte and secure the eastern entrance of Sogod Bay went over like a charm and with little enemy involvement.

By the end of Day 1 all planned objectives had been accomplished and as General Krueger stated, "it was accomplished ¹⁰ more easily than we had anticipated". However, there were many problems occurring on the beach between the navy and army. Many ships were missing loading manifests, loading plans and storage plans. Troops were coming ashore in a disorganized fashion and in many cases unit personnel and equipment were split up between many ships. In fact one medical unit's equipment was separated on thirteen different ships and was not married up with its unit until late in the operation. There were other problems with joint operation that will be discussed later.

On 21 October the the 1st Cavalry Division (X Corps) continued to make excellent progress and secured the city of

Tacloban. However on 22 October the 1st Cavalry Division ran into stiff encounters southwest of Tacloban where they killed about 300 Japanese. Two regiments from the 1st Cavalry Division secured the San Juanico Strait on 24 October and by the following day had secured all of the Tacloban area. By 29 October the 1st Cavalry Division had secured and occupied San Miguel and Barugo northeast of Leyte. However, when a small cavalry detachment was sent to secure the city of Carigara, they were driven out by a stiff Japanese force. At this point Sibert halted the 1st Cavalry Division until the 24th Division could catch up for a coordinated attack on Carigara. Meanwhile, the 25th had run into a very stiff defense on a hill mass northwest of Palo which blocked the entrance to Leyte Valley. On 21 October both Regiments of the 24th Division attacked the hill mass and secured it on 25 October after very heavy losses in men and equipment.

The 24th Division was ready to move into Leyte Valley but due to heavy losses, shortage of combat strength due to the 21st Regiment's mission in the Panaon Strait and the watch dog responsibility of the Palo area, it was not possible without additional support. Krueger decided to shift the Palo area over to the 1st Cavalry Division and move the 21st Regiment back under Sibert's command. Then the 24th Division was to move into Leyte Valley and on to Carigara for the coordinated attack. On 27 October the 24th Division moved into Leyte Valley and after heavy fighting secured it two days later, 29 October. The 24th Division married up with the 1st Cavalry Division on 30 October

for the coordinated attack on Carigara. After a very heavy artillery preparation on 1 November, the X Corps attacked Carigara. To Krueger's surprise the X Corps met very little resistance in Carigara and secured it in a timely manner. It was discovered that the Japanese had cleverly conducted a withdrawal to the west. This action ended Phase II for the X Corps since it had secured all of its programmed objectives.

The XXIV Corps was also making headway in southern Leyte. After heavy fighting the 96th Division overcame the enemy resistance in Dulag and secured it on 23 October. On the following day the 96th moved northwest and ran into strong enemy defenses outside the city of Tabontabon where they attacked but were driven back by a Japanese counterattack. On 27 October the Division attacked again and secured the town after heavy fighting. On 25 and 27 October Krueger released the 381st Regiment from 8th Army reserve back to the 96th Division. On 28 October the 382nd Regiment secured the final objective and Phase II was complete for the 96th.

The 7th Division also had made exceptional progress in the southern zone of XXIV Corps. Between 21 and 24 October the 7th successfully secured the Dulag, San Pablo, Burauen and Bayug airstrips with minimal losses. However, the 32nd Regiment ran into a strong defensive position around the Buri airstrips where many camouflage pillboxes, mines and other defenses were built in depth. After strong support from air, artillery and tanks, the 32nd overcame the resistance and secured the airfield on 27 October. An additional on order mission was given to the 7th Division to seize the southern city of Abuyoy and the west coast

town of Baybay. Krueger's plan was to turn the 7th Division's area over to the 96th Division and gradually push the 7th Division to the south to facilitate the operation of Phase III. On 28 October the 7th Division's Recon Troop and the 20th Battalion 32nd Infantry Regiment were sent south to seize Abuyog which they secured on 29 October. The 7th Recon Troop pushed west and secured Baybay on 1 November.

The XXIV Corps had secured all of its objectives by 2 November and was prepared to move to the west coast of Leyte to start Phase III.

Up until 2 November the 6th Army had been facing a Japanese Infantry Division (16th) with a combat strength of approximately 16,000 men. The exceptional progress that both Corps had made was primarily due to the overwhelming strength of U.S. combat forces (7 to 1)¹¹ However, this situation would change in Phase III of the Leyte operation. Between 25 October and 2 November the Japanese had been pouring in reinforcements by barge, ships and luggers. The Japanese units arriving were the 41st Infantry Regiment; the 189th and 171st Independent Infantry Battalions; two battalions of 102nd Division; the 20th Independent Antitank Battalion; the 30th Division Headquarters; the 35th Corps Headquarters; and the famous 1st Division, one of the best and most experienced units in the Japanese Army. Krueger estimated that over 22,400 combat troops had been put ashore.¹² Tough fighting was ahead for the 6th Army. Adequate air and naval support could have prevented many of these replacements from arriving.

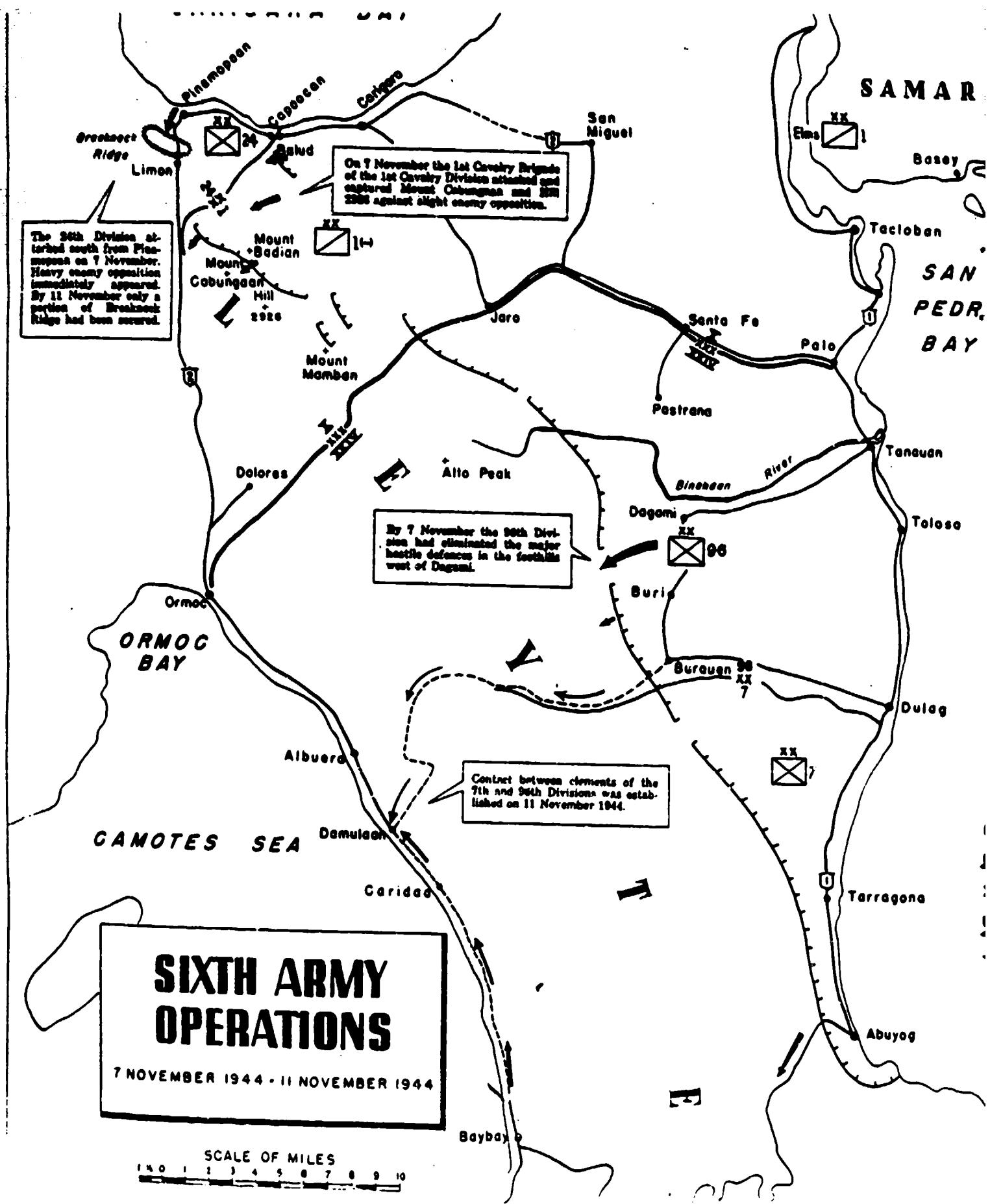
PHASE III

The mission for the Phase III had slightly been modified by Krueger as follows:

X Corps promptly to seize the Capoocan-Pinamopoan area, then to advance vigorously to the south, destroy enemy forces encountered and seize Ormoc; and to prepare on twelve hours' notice to initiate operations to seize Wright on Samar, and establish control over western and southern Samar to include the Wright-Taft Highway; XXIV Corps to destroy hostile forces on the west coast of Leyte within its zone of action.

13

The mission to seize the Capoocan-Pinamopoan area was promptly carried out by one regiment of the 24th Division on 4 November with very little resistance from the enemy. However, as for the mission to advance south toward Ormoc, the 24th Division experienced heavy rains which washed out the main road to Ormoc. The road became so deteriorated that it was closed to all vehicles except emergency traffic. For the remainder of the Leyte campaign the troops in the Pinamopoan area were primarily resupplied by LCMs through the San Juanico Strait from the supply dumps on the eastern shore Leyte. Many soldiers survived on cold C-Rations and food provided by the people of the Philippines. Navy logistical transportation was slow and untimely. Krueger became concerned that the X Division troops in Carigara Bay could be cut off by Japanese reinforcements from the sea such as had been pouring in at Ormoc Bay. Before directing the 24th Division to move south, he required the shore area between Barugo and Pinamopoan to be secured against a possible amphibious invasion. In addition, Krueger directed the 24th Division to secure the main road to Ormoc and implant several battalions of artillery within range of Ormoc for possible defensive shelling. This action was completed on 6 November and the 24th Division



sent a Regiment south to seize Ormoc. However, the Regiment ran into strong fortified Japanese defensive positions south of Pinamopoan and the toughest fighting of the campaign occurred at Breakneck Ridge--a north to south ridge stretching six miles toward Ormoc--located just south of Limon.

The XXIV Corps mission to clear western Leyte went well between 3 and 6 November. The only serious action occurred in the mountains west of Dagami where a regiment from the 96th Division encountered heavy opposition from the enemy's 16th Division--a captured soldier revealed that there were approximately 8000 combat soldiers in defensive position in the mountains.

Krueger became very concerned that the enemy was attempting to filter back into the Leyte Valley. On 4 November he modified the X Corps mission to protect against this possible infiltration by directing Sibert to move units northwest to block the road leading from Ormoc to Daro. On 6 November an order was found on a dead enemy soldier indicating a possible attack in mid-November. This order revealed a heavy presence of Japanese soldiers in the mountains stretching from Limon to Daro. It was determined that the famous 1st Division was located around Limon and three other regiments were dug in defensive position between Mount Minoro and Daro. The enemy's main attack was to secure the Capoocan--Carigara port area as a base for logistics and reinforcements. The main attack was to be conducted by the famous 1st Division. Subsequently, the 26th Japanese Division was to attack northeast from the Mount Momban area--The 26th Division was scheduled to arrive in Leyte on 8

November. Krueger felt that the enemy's plan was to divide the 6th Army's forces in half in Carigara and then use the port as a logistical base for further attacks into Leyte Valley. Krueger used the old cliche, "the best defense is a better offensive," and attacked south to maintain the initiative. On 7 November he directed X Corps to attack south from Pinamopoan. The 24th Division and the 1st Cavalry Division were to attack southwest from Carigara. The 24th Division immediately ran into trouble at Breakneck Ridge where the famed 1st Division was located. After seven days of the heaviest fighting in Leyte, the 24th Division secured the ridge sustaining extensive casualties.

The 1st Cavalry Division also ran into stiff resistance around Mount Pina from the Japanese 102nd Division. Heavy fighting waged for eight days before the 1st Cavalry finally secured hill 2926 on 15 November. The battle for Breakneck Ridge was a costly price for the X Corps--they had received 1498 casualties (killed, wounded and missing) as compared to 5,252 for the Japanese.

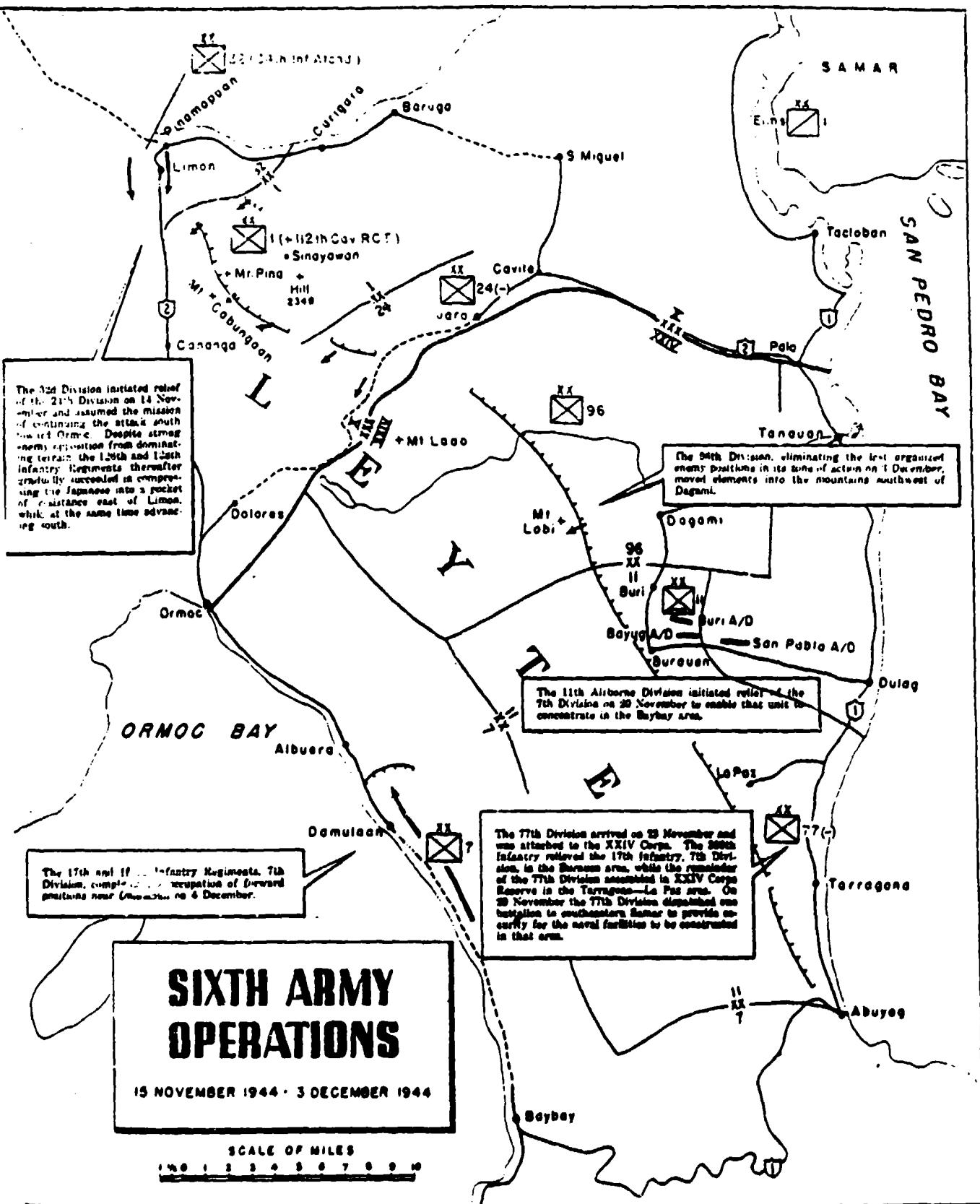
Hodge's XXIV Corps mission to secure the west coast of Leyte went extremely well between 3 and 11 November. The 98th Division had secured the Hills west of Dagami by 7 November and the 7th Division had secured Abuyog and Babbay by 10 November. The 7th Recon Troop (7th Division) had made a sweep through the southwest peninsula of Leyte with negative findings and had married up with the 7th Division north of Baybay.

The Japanese 28th Division was seen unloading in Ormoc Bay on 9 November. Krueger became concerned about the possibility of

the 28th attacking to the northeast up the Dalores-Daro Road. He directed Hodge to increase his defensive position west of Sante Fe and north of the Binahaan River to one Regimental Team and to put one regiment in Corps reserve.

With three weeks of constant fighting Sixth Army had taken numerous casualties. Many of these losses had occurred in the heavy fighting in the X Corps area. Krueger stated that on 8 November when MacArthur visited the Sixth Army area he had expressed his concern about the shortage of combat soldiers. At this particular time the Sixth Army was short 12,000 officers and 15 men. On 14 November some personnel relief came on board; the 112th Cavalry Regiment and the 32nd Infantry Division arrived. On 18 November the 11th Airborne Division and the 503rd Parachute Regiement came on board. The 32nd Division and the 112th Regiment were attached to X Corps and the 11th Airborne was attached to XXIV Corps.

On 18 November the 24th Division (X Corps) completed occupying the ridges around Limon. The 24th Division had been in the fight for three weeks and needed a rest--Krueger had the 32nd Infantry Division assume the mission to attack toward Orcom. The 32nd Division with two Regiments abreast moved south and after about two weeks of intense fighting drove the enemy out of the Limon area on 3 December. Both sides had accumulated numerous casualties. Two regiments from the 1st Cavalry Division were committed on the left of the 32nd Division. They also ran up against stiff resistance from the enemy. However, after several weeks of bloody fighting the 1st Cavalry secured its objective and married up with the 32nd Division south of Limon on 14



December to prepare for the attack on Ormoc.

Meanwhile the XXIV Corps was beginning to make progress in southern Leyte. The 7th Division moved one battalion from Baybay to Damulaan to join up with its regiment. The remainder of the 7th Division's units finished up their operations in the hills west of Burauen where heavy fighting was encountered. The 11th Airborne Division assumed the 7th Division's mission around Burauen on 20 November so the 7th could move onto the western coast of Leyte for further operations.

The 77th Division arrived from Guam on 23 November and was attached to XXIV Corps as its reserve. The 77th had left much of its equipment in Guam and had to be refitted with new equipment.

On 1 December Krueger received an order from MacArthur to delay the Mindoro invasion from 5 to 15 December. Krueger had tried once before to get Admiral Struble's navy task force to support an amphibian operation into the Ormoc Bay area. However, Struble refused to support such an operation due to the upcoming Mindoro operation. Krueger once again approached Struble about providing amphibian shipping for a landing at Ormoc. He agreed to support it even though he was still concerned about the possible danger of ship loss and the support requirements for the upcoming Luzon and Mindoro operations. Krueger gave the Ormoc mission to XXIV Corps and the 77th Division.

Between 28 November and 3 December Japanese reinforcements continued to pour into Leyte. The Army Air Force and the small naval task force at Leyte had some success in sinking troop shipping before it arrived at Leyte but not enough to stop the reinforcements pipeline completely. There was just not enough

U.S. air and naval power available to cover the entire area since the Kamikaze pilots had helped to drive out Halsey's Third Fleet.

The stage was now set for the Ormoc attack on 7 December. Krueger's Field Order directed the 77th Division to conduct the amphibian assault at Ormoc with naval and air in support of the landing. The X Corps's 32nd Division was to attack south along Highway 2 to support the northern flank of the 77th Division. Meanwhile in the south the XXIV Corps 7th Division was to attack north out of Damulaan toward Ormoc while the 11th Airborne Division was to push west toward Ormoc. The 77th Division landed on 7 December at Deposito four miles south of Ormoc with minimal fanfare from the enemy. However, enemy air action was intense. The Navy Task Force received moderate to heavy damage to several ships and some casualties. By 11 December the 77th Division had captured Camp Downs and Ormoc, the enemy's main logistical base. The 77th Division attacked north on the 12th of December and seized Cagon. By the 25th of December the X and XXIV Corps attacked south and north respectively securing the remainder of the western coast of Leyte. The 1st Cavalry Division secured Samar Island on 15 December with the capture of its capitol, Calbologon.

During the landing at Deposito two navy LSMs were sunk and another severely damaged. These losses severely reduced the supply hauling capability from the east coast of Leyte. In fact, Kinkaid had recommended that supplies be hauled over land to Baybay and from there to Ormoc by LCMs at night. However, due to Krueger's insistence the resupply operation was

continued by sea at a reduced rate. Once again, the shortage of naval shipping support had put limitations on the operations.

After the Ormoc operation the Leyte campaign was all but over. With the closure of the Bay of Ormoc the enemy's supply line was cut off. However, the enemy continued to resist for several months after the Ormoc operations. Even though the Sixth Army operation was a complete success, it was a very costly campaign. The Japanese lost 58,283 men who were killed and another 392 captured versus 2,888 killed, 9,858 wounded, and 161 missing for the U.S.
¹⁷

MOPPING UP

General Robert L. Erchelberger of Eighth Army assumed command of the Leyte Operation on 26 December 1944, so that Krueger's Sixth Army could prepare for further campaigns in the Philippines. The XXIV Corps and X Corps became a part of Eighth Army and remained on Leyte. There were still many large pockets of enemy soldiers on Leyte. Most of the concentration of Japanese troops were located in the northwest Leyte area and west of Highway 2 and north of Palompon and in the hills south of Palompon.
¹⁸

A mop-up operation is a thankless job but very essential to combat operations and security because of the number of enemy stragglers in the Leyte area. During the mop-up operation eight divisions were involved in various times and the time span was from 1 January to 8 May 1945. Erchelberger's Eighth Army waged a tough task in the mop-up phase. There were many U.S. casualties during the four month mop-up period. However, the Eighth Army was very successful in bringing total security and peace to

Leyte--Eighth Army established that it killed and found dead 20
24,294 and captured 439 Japanese during the mop-up period. It should be pointed out that MacArthur was notorious for ending campaigns early and then bringing in another Corps or Army Headquarters for the so called mopping up phase. MacArthur got his mileage off the media by then taking early credit for a victory which fed his large ego.

PROBLEMS

As Krueger pointed out in his book there were many problems at Leyte. The termination of the Mindanao operation and the move-up date for the Leyte operation, 20 December to 20 October 1944, naturally caused many shipping, transportation and 20 coordination problems.

One of the major logistical problems was the loading and prioritization of ships. The Army and Navy obviously did a very poor job in coordinating and organizing the cargo loading standards at embarkation. When ships came ashore at Leyte low-priority or heavy cargo was in many cases on top of high priority cargo and had to be unloaded to reach the urgently needed 21 supplies and equipment. Many of the loading plans and manifest were missing, inaccurate and insufficient. In fact, many units failed to find all of their equipment until the campaign was over in 1945. Many ships came ashore for unloading that were not scheduled between various Army/Navy agencies at all.

The movement of combat troops ashore in general went well. However, the later movement of support troops ashore was poorly organized. Many support troops arrived too early and others

arrived too late to properly support the operation--prioritization was very poor due to poor planning. Transportation problems would have been enhanced if each service had had liaison officers appointed to service with the Navy during the loading period.

The most serious problem was the shortage of hospital beds. This problem was primarily due to the slowness in unloading equipment. This slow down can be contributed to poor loading plans and prioritization. Many hospital units were loaded in several different ships which caused problems in getting them programmed into the same unloading area. There was also a shortage of hospital ships and some of those available were not fully utilized--several departed Leyte with only half of their beds full.

On the operation side military intelligence collection procedures were inadequate during the early stages of the operation. The short notification period caused the gathering of formulated maps, aerial photographs and enemy intelligence data to be slow. Of course the shortage of air support hindered the taking of recon photos and those that were taken were handicapped by the long turn around time due to not having dedicated aircraft early in the operation.

Fire coordination measures were a problem between Army and Navy as to when to shift responsibility ashore. During the early part of the land operation Army forward observers and Navy fire control personnel had different understandings of each others' fire terminology. This problem could have been solved earlier with prior joint service training.

The incompatibility of VHF radio sets caused communication problems between all services which were never solved. In fact, Army forward observers attempted to install compatible radios in Air Force planes with fruitless success. Sixth Army failed to publish a Naval Fire Support Plan. However, Sixth Army did detail each Corps the responsibility of coordinating naval fires ashore. The utilization of naval gunfire ashore was poor at its best after the amphibious phase was completed. Air Defense personnel were poorly trained in the identification of friendly and enemy aircraft. This caused friendly pilots to avoid coming too close to friendly troops on the ground for fear of being a target.

The shortage of supply support ships caused numerous problems with resupplying units in remote areas. Due to the incessant rain and the poor condition of roads, the only practical transportation in many cases was LVT's and LST's both of which were in short supply.

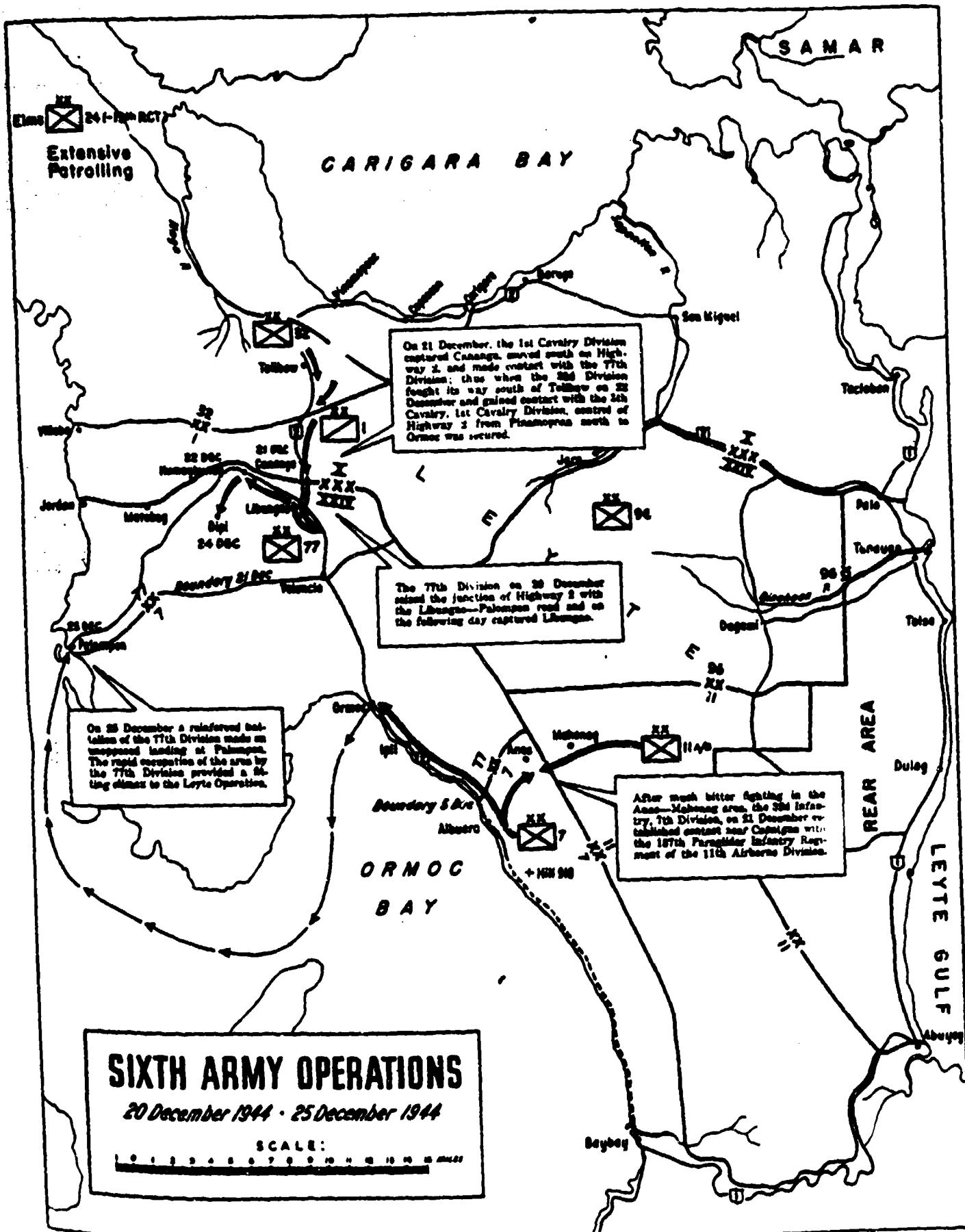
The single most major problem in the Leyte land campaign was the inadequate air support of offensive land operations. The Escort Carriers of the Seventh Fleet provided close combat support for the first few days of the Leyte land operation. However, the Sixth Army lost this air support before and after the Leyte Gulf encounters due to heavy naval air losses and the requirement to defend themselves in the objective area. After the 5th Air Force took over on 27 October, air support improved but the shortage of airfields and aircraft caused close support operations to be inadequate. In fact, the first close support

operation from the Fifth Air Force did not occur until 26 November 1944. There is no doubt that the number of U.S. casualties would have been greatly reduced if adequate air support had been available.

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CHAPTER V
AIR FORCE CAMPAIGN
PLANNING

In early 1944 the Air Force believed that the plan to invade the Leyte-Mindanao area without adequate airfields was a poor approach. In July 1944 Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, Commander U.S. Far East Air Forces informed MacArthur that the plan was not in harmony with air capabilities.¹ MacArthur wanted to seize the island of Morotai which was 350 miles from Mindanao, south of Leyte, and establish airfields to support the Leyte campaign. In addition, MacArthur visualized using carrier aircraft to support the Leyte operation until airdromes could be established ashore for the Air Force to assume the support role from the Navy. Kenney aggressively challenged this as an overoptimistic expectation of support from carriers.² Kenney referred to carrier units as being "so restricted in their time over targets and radius of action that they cannot be expected to neutralize and maintain neutralization of enemy strong points and air installation which would be within range of our objective."³ Kenney further stated that carrier plane support at the beachhead would be inadequate because of a lack of bombardment power. Close air support, surface and subsurface would also be limited because of the limitation of carriers on station time due to maintenance and supply problems. Kenney's argument to MacArthur was to establish fighter attack airfields at Taland Islands, halfway between Morotai and Sarangani and another immediate base on Mindanao prior to the Leyte invasion.

Kenney also felt that heavy bombers should be operational out of Sarangani and another immediate base on Mindanao prior to the Leyte invasion. Kenney also felt that heavy bombers should be operational out of Sarangani before the invasion of Leyte.

On 4 August 1944 the Allied Air Forces had 2,719 serviceable combat aircraft including 480 transports in the Pacific area. These numbers appeared impressive; however, these aircraft were strung out from Guadal Canal and Australia area to the Manus Island area some thousand miles from Morotai and even further from the Philippines.⁴ Before any of these aircraft could support the Philippine plan, airfields had to be built in a stepping stone approach to the objective area. The Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces were designated to support the Leyte operation --the Fifth was to operate out of Leyte eventually in a direct support role while the Thirteenth was to primarily function out of Morotai and the Talauds.

The decision to move the Leyte operation from 15 December to 20 October 1944 and to delete the Talauds/Mindanao operation came as no surprise to Kenney. Even though he had criticized MacArthur's early plan, he was now convinced that the Japanese were too demoralized to fight beyond the Philippine operation. Besides, he believed that the Japanese had lost too many efficient pilots and maintenance technicians in past encounters to be an effective fighting air force. He felt that a victory in the Philippines would probably force the Japanese Emperor's hand to pursue peace. He wrote Major General Ennis C. Whitehead, 5th Air Force Commander the following note explaining his position:

If my hunch is right that the Japs are about

through we are all right. Navy air will take care of the preliminary softening process and support the troops ashore long enough for us to get some airdromes for our land-based aviation. If the Jap intends to fight - and particularly if he can get some decent air support for his ground troops, we are in for a lot of trouble. I believe however that the gamble is worthwhile.

5

General H. H. Arnold, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, after reading Kenney's comments cautioned him about under estimating the Japanese will to win and ability to forcefully strike back at the appropriate moment. Of course Arnold's warning was justified since the Japanese Air Force strength in the Philippines was much stronger than Halsey realized.

THE JAPANESE AIR SITUATION

The Fourth Air Army was headquartered in Manila. The Fourth Air Army had three divisions; the 4th at Manila, the 2nd at Bacolad on Negros Island, and the 7th in the Celebes-Borneo area.⁶ The fighters were located at Manila and bombers were spread from Manila to Formosa. Operational aircraft strength in early October was about 400 planes for the Air Force and about 400 for the Navy also located on Manila. The Second Air Fleet moved to Manila in October to support the defense of the Allied invasion. Normally the Navy and Army did not cooperate very well together but the enemy situation caused them to put aside their differences and cooperate as Admiral Toyoda CINC of the Combined Fleet explained:

Should we lose in the Philippines operations, even though the fleet should be left, the shipping lanes to the south would be completely cut off so that the fleet, if it should come back to Japanese waters, could not obtain its fuel supply. If it should remain in southern

waters, it could not receive supplies of ammunition and arms. There was no sense in saving the fleet at the expenses of the loss of the Philippines.

7

The Japanese had lost numerous pilots during the Marianas encounter and were severely short navy pilots. Therefore, air support for the defense of the Philippines was to come from land base planes in Manila and the surrounding bases.

LEYTE OPERATIONS

The airfield construction plan for Leyte was very optimistic. Major General Casey's ASCOM command was given the mission of constructing a field suitable for two fighter groups and a fighter squadron by A plus 5 and three additional fighter fields by A plus 30.

By A plus 30 four medium and one heavy bomber airfields were to be completed along with over 600 heavy bomber hardstands and a depot assembly facility for gliders/fighters.

9

As far as preliminary Air Force combat operations for the Leyte operations, the activity was very light in September. A strike on 18 September by twenty-seven Liberators on Mindanao and another at Zomboanya, Mindanao on 7 October by nineteen B 24's were the only real action which caused any significant damage--several enemy barracks, warehouses and oil storage facilities were destroyed. Between 9 and 11 October the Halsey's Third Fleet aircraft started its preliminary air support of the Leyte operation by attacking Marcus Island, Okinawa and Formosa. The attack on Formosa did not fool the Japanese and they returned the air attack on the Third Fleet with their Second Air Fleet.

Several of Halsey's heavy cruisers were severely damaged during this encounter. A false report by the Japanese Naval Headquarters in Japan indicated that fifty seven American ships had been sunk. On 14 October a Japanese task force was reported to have been sent to mop-up crippled U.S. ships. Halsey intercepted this coded message and decided to use his cripples as decoys to suck in the Japanese task force. Halsey sent MacArthur a message informing him that carrier support for the Leyte operation would not be available due to impending Japanese naval attack -- Halsey was following his mission orders to attack enemy naval ships if the situation presented itself. This action by Halsey was concerning to MacArthur since the Seventh Fleet was already enroute to Leyte for the invasion. Kenney decided to take up some of the air support slack and ordered the Thirteenth Air Force's heavy bomber squadrons to expedite their move and installation at Morotai as time and space became available. On 18 October Kenney ordered pre-invasion attacks on the western Visayas. The Fifth Air Force also stepped up its activity with heavy bomber attacks on Mindanao from Morotai. The Fifth Air Force pounded facilities on Mindanao from 18 October until A-Day even though they were operating at an extreme range from Morotai. On 13 October a Japanese plane spotted the Third Fleet before Halsey could spring his trap on the Japanese; therefore, the Third Fleet resumed its support of the Leyte operation on 17 October.

The Air Force participation in the Leyte Gulf naval encounter was limited. The nearest Air Force base during the Leyte Gulf

naval battles was on Morotai which was still in its pre-occupation stages. However, the Fifth Air Force did send fifty-six B-24's from Morotai on 25 October to intercept Kurita's Center Force but due to poor intelligence the rendezvous never happened. On 26 October twenty-one B-24's from Air Force intercepted a Japanese crippled light cruiser and sunk her. Several other smaller encounters with Kurita's retreating force occurred but causing only minor damage. This was the Army-Air Corps contribution to the Leyte Gulf encounter.

After the Battle of Surigao Strait Kinkaid's escort carrier group was incapacitated and the beachhead fighter support was poor. Kinkaid asked Kenney's Allied Air Force and Halsey's Third Fleet for fighter support on the beachhead. Kenney complied with help by sending P-38's from Morotai. Halsey's Third Fleet stayed on station until 30 October when they withdrew due to heavy damage of three carriers by Kamikaze attacks. On October 27 the first Air Force fighters arrived at Tacloban airfield to provide close ground support. Kenney stated that there had been "a lot conservation--to the effect that the Navy would take control of the P-38's as soon as they landed on Taclobon", for this reason MacArthur ordered the Air Force to assume the mission ¹¹ on 27 October. Thereafter all land targets were allocated to the Air Force and the Navy had to coordinate with the Air Force to strike land targets. By 30 October the number of P-38's had been reduced to twenty due to maintenance problems and combat losses. On 1 November a heavy Japanese air attack damaged aircraft at Taclobon, sunk one destroyer and damaged three ships from the 7th Fleet. Kinkaid immediately asked Kenney and Halsey

for more fighter cover. Kenney sent a few fighter planes from Morotai but refused to provide further cover until air facilities were made available on Leyte. Halsey also refused to expose his carriers to Kamikaze attacks but did offer surface ship support which he sent. By mid November the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces established themselves on Morotai and attacked numerous targets in the Philippine chain. In fact, between 27 October and 26 December over 3,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Japanese facilities in the Philippines. During November the Air Force lost 31 aircraft but destroyed over 193 enemy aircraft. ¹² By mid-November two squadrons of bombers became operational on Palau Island, and two more squadrons arrived in late November. Kenney directed these four bomber squadrons to hit enemy airdromes on Luzon where they caused significant damage.

The airfield construction on Leyte fell far behind due to very heavy rainfall and muddy conditions. There was a significant shortage of construction material and local labor. Materials for airfield runways were also nonexistent on Leyte; therefore, steel-matted strips had to be used. The Tacloban airfield was the most heavily used during the operation. The Dulag airfield was put in operation on 21 November. Damage by enemy planes to both of these airfields was frequent and at times extensive. The Japanese flew over 1033 sorties over Leyte during November and December. The Fifth Air Force shot down 314 of these sorties. It was now quite evident that General Arnold's statement to Kenney was correct --never under estimate the

Japanese air capabilities.

The Fifth Air Force covered the 77th Division's amphibious landing at Ormoc on 7 December with P-38's fighters in an exceptional manner. These P-38's shot down fifty-three out of seventy-five enemy aircraft that appeared on the scene at Ormoc. Without their support the Ormoc landing would not have happened. Even with the Combat Air Patrol support, suicide planes still sunk three ships and heavily damaged several others.

The last troop convoy ships the Japanese tried to move into Leyte was on 11-12 December which met with disaster. The Army and Marine fighters from Tacloban sunk two cargo ships, three destroyers, a transport and shot down thirty-two enemy fighters. These were the last enemy aircraft employed against Leyte. Air Force airplane losses during the Leyte land campaign were 102 in November and 101 in December. However, only fifty-nine casualties occurred in the Fifth Fighter Command during the same period, which can be contributed to excellent air-sea rescue efforts by the Navy and Army.

The biggest problem with air operations at Leyte was the lack of air base facilities. The Air Force had adequate crews and aircraft available to support the ground operations but they could not provide the needed support without air strips for their planes. By 14 December there were 317 fighters stationed at Leyte; on an average 232 were operational each day. During the Leyte operation ¹⁴ bomber facilities were never completed. The 5th Air Force had to keep twenty fighters on continuous air patrols to interdict enemy convoys carrying reinforcements. Consequently, close air support for the ground troops was poor in the early

part of the operation. Kenney pointed out to a ground board investigation over the lack of close air support that "it was more efficient to kill the enemy and destroy his equipment in convoys approaching Leyte than to expend the same effort less efficiently against the enemy shore."¹⁵ However, it should be noted that the Fifth Fighter Command flew 360 sorties on land targets before the end of December 1944. Air cargo support was another area that was limited by air field space. During the Leyte operation only eight C-47 cargo planes were able to participate. After the Leyte campaign a Sixth Army report stated that "the vital relationship of airpower to the success of the offensive as measured by the period of time required to complete the utter destruction of the hostile force."¹⁶ This statement pretty well sums up air support for the Leyte operation. The lack of air facilities on Leyte cost the Army a quick and easy victory and constructional delay almost jeopardized the follow-on invasions of other Philippine islands. Poor intelligence about Leyte and the accelerated invasion of Leyte also contributed to poor planning efforts on the part of the Army and Navy. As an after thought it would have probably been less costly in lives if the planned invasion of Leyte had been left for 20 December so that airfields could have been installed at Mindanao. Then the Air Force could have provided adequate support for the campaign that would have probably saved many American lives.

CHAPTER V

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Leyte Campaign was a decisive blow for the Japanese Navy and the beginning of the end for the Japanese Army and Air Force. General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the 14th Army Commander, admitted after the war that after the loss of Leyte he "realized that decisive battle" meaning a decisive victory for Japan, "was impossible."¹ He also stated that the Battle for Leyte Gulf destroyed the Japanese Navy as an effective fighting force and the land campaign on Leyte caused such attrition in the Japanese Army and Air Force strength that failure in the campaign for Luzon became inevitable.² Another important point was the significance of the geographical location of Leyte; it was referred to as the last of the supply lines to the Indies. With the defeat at Leyte the raw materials necessary for the war effort were cut off. Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai stated after the war that "our defeat at Leyte, was tantamount to the loss of the Philippines; when you took the Philippines, that was the end of our resources," Japan no longer possessed the means to wage effective warfare.³ One of the problems that the Japanese experienced and that the United States capitalized on was the way the Japanese Army and Air Force was strung out in the South Pacific. The Japanese were in an indefensible position with the numerous islands which they were attempting to occupy. Any abrupt effort required adequate transports for movement which the Japanese did not have since the U.S. submarines had sunk many of their merchant ships. Realizing

this MacArthur and Halsey chose to by-pass many of the Japanese strong points such as Mindanao and attack/secure less defended islands such as Morotai. This tactic was one of the success stories of the Pacific war and was verified by General Tojo, the former Japanese Navy Minister of Defense in a statement to MacArthur. He stated that the three main reasons for the defeat of Japan were the U.S. Navy's "leapfrogging" strategy of bypassing important centers of Japanese military power like Robaul, Wewak and Mindanao; the far-ranging activities of Fast Carriers Forces Pacific Fleet; and the destruction of merchant shipping by U.S. submarines.⁴

The Japanese were badly beaten at Leyte but they came very close to turning events around in their favor due to U.S. blunders. The U.S. blunders started prior to the Leyte operation.

Jealousy, mistrust and protectionism were evident in the actions of some senior leaders in the Pacific campaigns. Admiral King, the Chief of Naval Operations and Admiral Nimitz, the Pacific Commander were very protective of naval turf and were distrustful of the other services, particularly of the Army. The decision on what routes to take in the stepping stone march across the Pacific to defeat Japan was wrapped up in a squabble amongst MacArthur, Nimitz, Marshall and King. King and Nimitz favored by-passing the Philippines and attacking Formosa, the China coast and several islands in the Bonins with the Navy as the unified commander. Of course MacArthur felt he should be in charge and that the Philippines should be liberated; his decision was based on sentimental and ego reasons. MacArthur promised the

Philippino people he would return and he desperately wanted to
avvenge his earlier defeat to Japan. King was also very
protective of his fast attack carriers. In fact, he held
operational control of the carriers and openly stated that only
naval officers would ever command his carriers. MacArthur was
also distrustful and protective of the Army. He refused to let
any allied generals command American units. In fact, he felt that
allied officers were not competent enough to lead American
troops. After Marine Corps General Holland M. Smith relieved
Major General Ralph Smith in the Marianas for supposedly
inefficiency, General Marshall swore that no Army general would
again serve under a Marine general. Jealousy, mistrust and
protectionism were all involved in the Halsey decision to leave
the San Bernardino Strait unprotected. He violated one of the
most important principles of war--unity of command.

FM 100-5 states that this principle ensures that all efforts
are focused on a common goal and for every objective, ensure
unity of effort under one responsible commander. Halsey claims
in his notes on Leyte that he left the San Bernardino Strait
unprotected because he felt that after the air/sea Battle of the
Sibuyan Sea on 24 October, the Central Force had been defeated so
badly that they were no longer a threat to the Seventh Fleet in
Leyte Gulf and if they did attack, Kinkaid possessed more than
adequate forces to defend himself. Halsey's information on the
defeat of Central Force was based on optimistic reports from his
Navy aviators which later proved to be inaccurate. Even though
Halsey had a verbal obligation with MacArthur to support the

Leyte operation, his superior, Admiral Nimitz, inserted the now famous mission statement in Halsey's operation plan for Leyte, "if opportunity exists or can be created to destroy major portions of enemy fleet this becomes primary task." ⁷ Halsey goes on to say that he took out after the Southern Force because he felt they were the stronger force with carriers and their defeat would serve to shorten the war. He also says he communicated his intent to Kinkaid who never received the transmission. Communication was another problem for the Navy. Halsey recommended after the Leyte Gulf campaign that dedicated command channels (VHF) be provided for future Navy campaigns. He also admitted that a unified commander should have been designated for the Leyte operation. Of course he felt the unified commander should have been Navy--service ego and protectionism comes out again. Edwin P. Hoyt states in his book that because of Halsey's orders; because of the jealousy between Army and Navy forces at the highest level; because this was the moment of change in approach to the Pacific war although the change had not yet taken place; because of all these things; the second turning point of the war after Leyte comes about; the result of Halsey's decision to go north after Admiral Ozawa was important in determining the future ⁸ course of the war. As stated before Halsey supported the argument that in any situation there should be a single commander in charge. Holt contends that historically speaking, this is the ⁹ importance of Leyte from a strategic point of view. In my opinion Halsey also almost gave the victory to the Japanese with his poor decision to take out after the Northern Force and he should have been relieved. After Leyte, Mac Arthur would become

the unified commander of the Pacific campaign.

Security is the second principle of war that was not properly adhered to at Leyte. FM 100-5 stated that security enhances freedom of action by reducing friendly vulnerability to hostile acts, influence or surprise and never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage.¹⁰ Security can be achieved through active deceptive operations. The services did a very poor job with deceptive operations and surprise. There were only two attempts at deceptive operations and they were both ineffective. One was a British naval attack on Nicobar Island in the Indian Ocean which was to mislead the Japanese into thinking that the main attack was going to be on Indonesia so as to pin down the Japanese Fleet at Singapore. The other was the bombardment of Marcus Island which was to indicate that our main attack was coming up through the Bonins. Both failed miserably, and had no effect on the Japanese. According to Morison, Allied Intelligence of Japanese movements and intentions was spotty and defective.¹¹ MacArthur's headquarters was responsible for the intelligence gathering effort and was almost always wrong on their prediction.

On A-Day his G-2 issued an intelligence assessment that stated an approach of the Japanese Fleet through Surigao Strait or San Bernardino Straits would be impractical because of navigational hazards and the lack of maneuvering space.¹² One day after A-day MacArthur's G-2 issued an intelligent assessment that indicated that the Japanese would not interfere with Leyte Campaign. The intelligence effort before, during and after

Leyte was very poor. We should be thankful that our overwhelming strength offset our efforts with security since it appears we completely ignored this important principle of war.

Surprise is a principle of war that is really a component of security--if you have one, you have the other. FM 100-5 states that with surprise you strike the enemy at a time or place, or in a manner for which he is unprepared. ¹³ From a tactical point of view we did achieve surprise by attacking Leyte. However, the Japanese had guessed several months prior to the Leyte operation that the attack was going to be in the Philippines but they didn't know exactly what island. The U.S. attempt at surprise was poor at best.

The principles of Mass, Economy of Force and Maneuver were also violated. FM 100-5 states that the principles of maneuver places the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible ¹⁴ application of combat power. Mass and economy of force compliment maneuver. Mass is to concentrate combat power at the decisive place and time; economy of force is to allocate minimum ¹⁵ essential combat power to secondary efforts. We violated all three of these principles due to the lack of air power on Leyte. The monsoon season produced an excessive amount of rainfall and mud that precluded the construction of air fields to accomodate fighters and bombers. The Kamikaze attacks and requirements to support other operations in the Pacific drove Halsey's Third Fleet out of Leyte on 27 October 1944 and caused a severe shortage of air support at Leyte. Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet had carrier escorts to support the operation but their aviation assets were severely depleted at the Battle of Samar where

several carriers were lost and several other were heavily damaged. Therefore, the lack of air support permitted the Japanese to convoy reinforcements from the surrounding islands and place the U.S. at a disadvantage by not being able to concentrate combat power in the objective area. Halsey's decision to vacate the Leyte area also pulled a powerful force away from the objective area. In essence, we may have been better off if we had retained the original schedule of attacking Mindanao first to obtain airfields to support the Leyte operation.

There were many other joint operational problems that hindered the Leyte operations. In fact, these same joint operational problems are still apparent today. The loading of troop and transport ships was accomplished in a haphazard manner. According to Sixth Army after action reports from the G-4 and G-3, Army transportation liaison officers were not attached to the Navy to supervise and coordinate the loading of ships. Consequently, numerous ships were loaded with low priority equipment on top of high priority equipment and the same effort happening with support troops which caused a bottle neck ashore. Upon unloading ships it was discovered that many ships were missing loading plans and manifest. This situation caused mass confusion on the beachhead and in fact, there were over 100,000 tons still aboard on ships in December 1944. The bottom line was poor prior coordination, prioritization and organization on the part of the Army and Navy.

Another problem was incompatible radio sets between the

services. The Army attempted to use Navy and Air Force aircraft to adjust artillery fire but this proved to be a fruitless effort since VHF sets were incompatible. There was also a fire control problem between the Army and the Navy as to where to shift responsibility ashore. The Army and Navy were also unfamiliar with each other's fire commands which caused a delay in naval gun support. Most of these problems could have been solved with prior joint operation training.

The Leyte campaign was unquestionably a great historical battle that will serve to teach tacticians and strategists about what not to do in joint operations. The Leyte Gulf battles were the greatest encounters in Navy history and will serve as a model for teaching naval tactics in the foreseeable future. From a joint perspective the Leyte campaign could be characterized more as a jointless exercise than a jointness one. The Goldwater/Nichols Act has probably done more to stamp out service jealousy, mistrust and protectionism than any other action. It should have been enacted many years ago.

ENDNOTES

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2. Ibid., p. 397.
3. Stanley L. Falk, Decision At Leyte, New York, W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1966, p. 319.
4. Morison, p. 412.
5. Ibid., p. 4.
6. United States Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, Operations, Washington D.C., Headquarters Department of the Army, May 1986, p. 175.
7. Morison, p. 58
8. Edwin P. Holt, The Battle of Leyte Gulf, New York, Weybright and Talley, 1972, p. 294.
9. Ibid., 294.
10. United States Department of the Army, p. 176.
11. Morison, p. 71.
12. Ibid., p. 72.
13. United States Department of the Army, p. 176.
14. Ibid., p. 175.
15. Ibid., p. 174.

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20. Tomochika Yoshiharu, "The True Facts of the Leyte Operations," 186th Langage Detachment, 8th Army, APO 343, 5 November 1945.

21. United States Department of the Army, Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations, Washington D.C., Headquarters Department of the Army, May 1986.

22. Woodward C. Vann, The Battle For Leyte Gulf, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1947.